WORLD BANK NEWS

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EVENTS

Food For Thought
Population Growing Faster Than Food Supplies

Population growth will outstrip developing countries' food supplies in the next 20 to 30 years unless agricultural research continues to provide ways to increase crop yields and grow food more efficiently. That's the message from scientists gathering this week in Lucerne, Switzerland, to discuss food security and the future of the world's largest agricultural research consortium, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

CGIAR scientists are joining ministers and heads of aid agencies from around the world on February 9-10 to increase international cooperation in agricultural research as a way to close the widening food gap. That effort will depend more and more on modernizing farms and using research to coax greater yields from existing croplands as the amount of arable land and other resources grows more scarce.

CGIAR

Gains in grains.

"The transition from traditional to scientifically improved agriculture in an essential process," says Ismail Serageldin, chairman of CGIAR and the World Bank's vice president for Environmentally Sustainable Development. "The image of the poor farmer, frequently a woman, working with a hoe and harvesting a few bushels of grain or a few roots has been overtaken in many places by the advent of more productive, scientific agriculture. But much remains to be done."

Currently, CGIAR spends $272 million a year, about 4 percent of total agricultural research expenditure in and for de-

See **CGIAR**, *page 2*

A Bank study looks at new ways to fund health care in Africa. **2**

Uganda plans improvements in district-level heath care. **2**

A vast collection of World Bank data is now available on CD-ROM. **6**

Press advisory, page 4

Development agenda, page 5

Lending roundup, page 6

READEX FICHE

More Research Needed To Raise Farm Output

CGIAR, *from page 1*

veloping countries. Even as demand for food has grown globally, the share of agriculture in total development assistance has fallen from 20 percent in 1980 to 14 percent in 1990. The cuts are particularly dangerous as research becomes more difficult. Additional yield gains are harder to achieve as scientists are increasingly pushing against biological and environmental limits. And gains, once made, are constantly threatened by more aggressive pests and diseases moving from continent to continent.

"Further declines in spending on agricultural development would compromise food security, the environment and the health and well-being of millions of families in the developing world," says Serageldin.

The challenges are great. Despite scientific advances that now feed one billion more people, 700 million people still face endemic hunger. Through the 1980s, food production failed to keep pace with population growth in 75 developing countries. Fifteen developing countries experienced falls of 20 percent or more in per capita food production in that time, including Malawi, Namibia, Nicaragua, Niger and Sudan. These trends have recently reversed, but food pressure will only increase as world population grows by 85 million people a year for the next 20 to 30 years, the largest annual increase in history. More than 90 percent of this increase will occur in developing countries, mostly in Asia and Africa.

And the solutions are more complicated than relying on the myth that distributing food surpluses from developed to developing countries will solve the food security problem, according to CGIAR scientists. Such non-crisis food aid promotes dependence, undermines rural economies and keeps farmers trapped in poverty. It is cheaper and more effective for local farmers to grow food for their consumers, using adapted, sustainable technology and improved plant stocks.

CGIAR—co-sponsored by the Bank, the U.N. Development Programme and U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization and made up of 16 international agricultural research centers—is central to the worldwide push to head off food shortages. CGIAR scientists conduct research on foods that make up 75 percent of the typical diet in developing countries, and the consortium has helped produce dramatic yield jumps in rice, wheat, maize, potatoes and other staple crops. At the

See **CGIAR**, *page 6*

What Is CGIAR?

The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research is an informal association of 43 governments, international organizations and private foundations supporting an international research system for agriculture, forestry, fisheries and natural resources management in developing countries.

The CGIAR is jointly sponsored by the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, and the Food and Agriculture Organization.

For additional information on the CGIAR and its 16 research centers, contact Heinrich Von Loesch, 202-473-8913.

CGIAR's Super Crops

Rice. CGIAR-supported researchers in the Philippines have developed a new breed of "super rice" that will produce 25 percent more grain on the same amount of land and help feed an additional 450 million people a year.

Maize. A hardy new breed of maize developed by scientists at the CGIAR member center in Mexico can increase harvests by 40 percent in the tough environments of the developing world and, if planted on a large scale, feed 50 million more people.

Wheat. A new wheat strain is resistant to leaf rust, for centuries the most destructive disease for wheat, which is the most important cereal grain for humans.

Cassava. Major advances in breeding cassava—the main staple for 200 million Africans—promise to reduce food shortages in that continent. New "super cassava" varieties that can double, even triple, current yields in Africa are being tested at the CGIAR member center in Nigeria.

Perfected Potatoes.

PUBLICATIONS

Africa's Healthy Financing

Report Shows Promise of Health Care User Fees, Insurance

The need to improve health care in Sub-Saharan Africa is critical. Most people in the region don't have access to quality care, and the problems are only worsening as AIDS spreads and populations boom—especially the growth of the poorest groups. Cash-strapped government systems, which dominate health care in Africa, are widely lamented as inefficient, inequitable and unsustainable, and in light of Africa's weak economic performance the prospects for government-financed quality health for all are bleak.

The challenge facing African countries is how to find other, sustainable sources of funding for improved health care. In response, a new World Bank report offers a fresh perspective on two of the most promising means: user fees and self-financing health insurance. The report, *Financing Health Care in Sub-Saharan Africa Through User Fees and Insurance* by Bank economists Paul Shaw and Charles Griffin, draws lessons from successful programs in several countries and confronts misconceptions about the impacts of cost recovery on the poor.

"The heart of the issue is to find acceptable ways to tap resources that African households seem generally willing and able to pay for health, while simultaneously ensuring that people are receiving good value for money," says Ravi Kanbur, chief economist in the Bank's Africa Region, in a foreword to the report. "It is now time to build on the growing evidence that well-designed user fees and self-financing insurance offer previously unexpected opportunities to develop better health care systems in Sub-Saharan Africa."

According to the report, carefully considered user fee policies not only provide critical health care revenue, but can improve the entire sector's efficiency, fairness and sustainability. And self-financing insurance enable groups of people to pool resources for care in cases of catastrophic illnesses, freeing up scarce public money to provide health goods and services to all people.

User Fees

The issue facing Sub-Saharan Africa is not whether to charge user fees—user fees are already being charged—but rather how to employ them to promote better, sustainable, more equitable health care. Among the key points indentified in the study:

• Private expenditures are already the

See **HEALTH**, *page 4*

LENDING

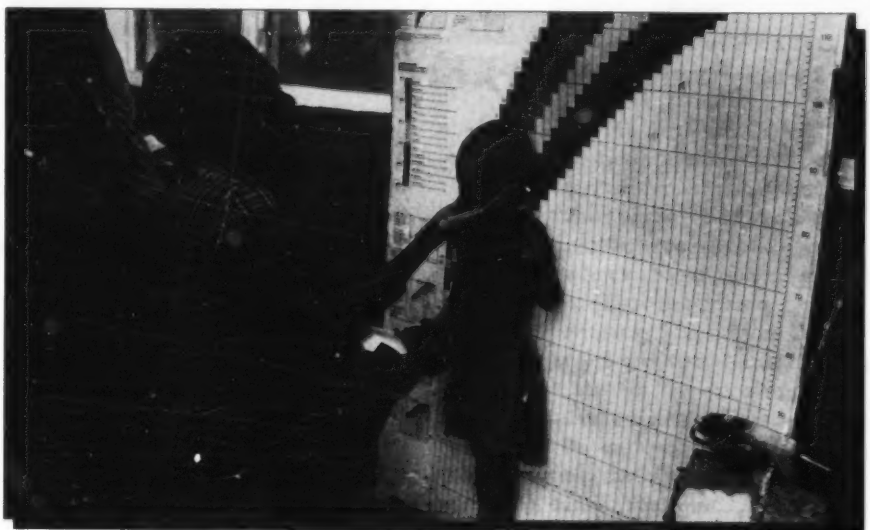
Uganda Boosts Health Care

Health care is poor for Uganda's 17.5 million people. Their life expectancy at birth is only 47 years, and a recent survey showed almost half the children under five to be underweight. Health spending there is lower than in most countries in the region, and the leading causes of death in Uganda are all diseases that are, to varying degrees, preventable: AIDS, tuberculosis, pneumonia, malaria and diarrhea.

Now Uganda, as part of its promising on-going reform effort, is moving to boost its health care, in part by giving district governments more control over the system. To help them prepare for their new responsibilities, the International Development Association this week approved a $45 million credit for a range of health care pilot and demonstration projects in selected districts. The project will test the best ways to deliver essential health care to district populations and improve management and planning at both the district and national levels.

The project will monitor pilot projects on the delivery of an essential health package in three districts, and eventually extend the service to ten demonstration districts. The package will be a mixture of the most cost-effective public health programs (such as malaria control, nutrition and maternal/child health programs) and clinical treatment of common diseases and health problems. The project will help provide drugs, vitamins, equipment and supplies, training, research and specialized advice.

In all districts, the project will help health agencies strengthen their administrative capacities and rehabilitate individual health units.□



World Bank

Health a growing concern.

Risk-Sharing is Way to Cut Government Costs

HEALTH, *from page 3*

largest single contributor to health care expenditure throughout the region.

• People will pay for quality care. Research suggests that when user fees are accompanied by improved quality, use of modern health care facilities doesn't fall off.

• Price alone doesn't dictate peoples' health care choices. Distance to facilities, personal characteristics and quality of care all play a role.

• By sending price signals to consumers, user fees can actually improve the referral network and the efficiency and quality of the health care system.

Insurance

Pessimism regarding prospects for self-financing insurance in the region is giving way to new optimism, the report says. Such insurance pools contributions from many people—a process of risk sharing—to cover expensive hospital bills by those who incur the most serious illnesses. According to the report, it is virtually the only practical way for governments to get out of across-the-board government subsidies for expensive hospital care, and thus release funds for public health, preventative and primary services that help the poor. Lessons learned in the study suggests:

• Risk sharing, in a variety of forms, is far more common in the region than previously thought. All African countries offer opportunities for self-financing insurance to grow.

• Prospects for self-financing insurance are particularly strong in urban areas, where more people are formally employed.

• In rural areas, pre-payment schemes through existing agricultural co-operatives have worked in Africa and elsewhere.

• Health services can't be privatized without some kind of self-financing insurance to protect large numbers of people from catastrophic illnesses.□

World Bank

A booster for African health.

WASHINGTON PRESS ADVISORY

Stock Markets Conference

The World Bank will sponsor a two-day conference on Stock Markets, Corporate Finance and Economic Growth, February 16-17, at the Bank's Washington headquarters. Researchers will present new measures of stock market development and argue that countries with more liquid stock markets enjoy higher long-run economic growth. Panels of experts will discuss the links between stock market development and growth, the complementary services provided by stock markets and banks; steps that countries can take to encourage stock market development; and the relationships between liberalized capital flows, stock market development, market volatility and growth.

Journalists are invited to attend all sessions and to interview participants. The conference will begin at 9 a.m. on Feb. 16 and 10:30 on Feb. 17 in the street level auditorium of the Bank's "J" Building (701 18th St. NW, Rm. J1-050).

For more information, including abstracts and the conference agenda, contact Lawrence MacDonald at (202) 473-7465.

Correction

We listed an incorrect fax number in last week's story on the Bank's recent conference on the Uruguay Round trade negotiations and its effect on developing countries.

To obtain a copy of the one the papers presented at the conference, please fax your request to (202) 676-1341, or send it via electronic mail to NARTIS@WORLDBANK.ORG

Development Agenda

Date	Event	Sponsor	Location	Telephone
FEBRUARY				
10-11	Workshop: The Role of East Asian Governments in Economic Development: A Comparative Institutional Analysis	World Bank	Stanford, CA	(202) 473-6444*
10-12	Seminar: Local Heritage in the Changing Tropics: Innovative Strategies for Natural Resource Management and Control	World Bank	Hartford, CT	(202)458-2310*
16-17	Conference on Stock Markets, Corporate Finance and Economic Growth	World Bank	Washington	(202)473-7465*
21-23	Better Health in Africa, Panel Meeting	WHO/UNICEF/Gov'ts of Sweden, Switzerland, United States/World Bank	Paris	(202)458-8012*
27-28	Tanzania Consultative Group Meeting	World Bank	Paris	(33-1)4069-3016
MARCH				
1	Uzbekistan Consultative Group Meeting	World Bank	Paris	(33-1)4069-3016
2-3	Kazakhstan Consultative Group Meeting	World Bank	Paris	(33-1)4069-3016
6-12	World Summit for Social Development	United Nations	Copenhagen	(221)963-5873
9-10	Zimbabwe Consultative Group Meeting	World Bank	Paris	(33-1)4069-3016
13-15	Mozambique Consultative Group Meeting	World Bank	Paris	(33-1)4069-3016
22-24	Second Annual Congress of the Americas	World Congress, Inc.	Mexico City	1-800-767-9499*
23-24	Cote d'Ivoire Consultative Group Meeting	World Bank	Paris	(33-1)4069-3016

Editor's Note: *Development Agenda* is a feature that alerts journalists to key news events in the field of economic development. Journalists should contact sponsoring agencies for details about each event. Asterisk (*) indicates telephone number is in the U.S.A. All other telephone numbers include country and city codes.

Food Research "A Race with Time"

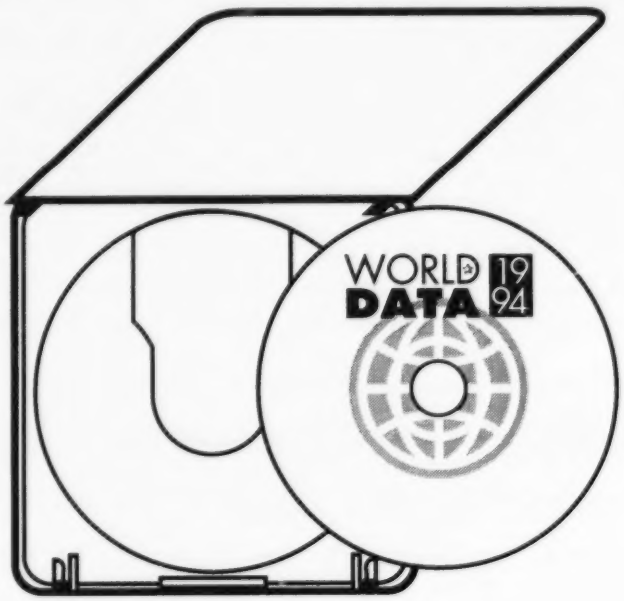
CGIAR, *from page 2*

Lucerne meeting, CGIAR members and sponsors will debate its future research agenda, which will center on increasing productivity, protecting the environment, saving biodiversity, improving agricultural policy and fortifying national research programs.

"In order to address these challenges, CGIAR must become very flexible," says Serageldin. "We are in a race with time, to develop the appropriate technology and bring it to poor farmers, while population growth in the poorest countries puts pressure on scarce resources and a fragile environment."□

PANAMA

In Panama, despite gains made in recent years and increased health spending, one third of the population does not have access to a basic health facility. In the more sparsely populated and poorer rural areas, access to health care is even lower, and bad nutrition and sanitary conditions make things worse. In Panama's poorest districts, up to 70 percent of children enter school with some growth retardation, and almost a third of households don't have access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. A new $25 million Bank loan will help the Central American country improve health care in its poorest areas. The project, approved Feb. 7, aims to reduce malnutrition among young children through feeding programs, increase the coverage of water and basic sanitation services in about 700 communities and extend basic health nutrition services to about 75,000 rural people. The project will also help district and national agencies better oversee health, nutrition and sanitation operations.



For information on single user or network purchases, contact the Bank's Office of the Publisher at (202) 473-1155, or by fax at (202) 473-0581.

A World of Data

The most comprehensive set of statistical data the World Bank has ever produced is now available on the Bank's first CD-ROM product.

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WORLD BANK NEWS

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